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COMMUNICATION

To the Managing Editor of the *American Historical Review*:

Dear Sir:

Mr. Mooney's notice of my book entitled *The Fighting Cheyennes* contains certain errors of statement which perhaps should be set right.

For example, he says, "In 1837 matched against Indians, they were completely routed by the Kiowas, a smaller tribe, with the loss of every man of their best warrior company". Mr. Mooney does not say that the "48 men" of this warrior company were the only Cheyennes in this fight and that they were surrounded by the whole Kiowa tribe and killed to a man. To term this a rout of the Cheyennes by the Kiowas seems inexact. The testimony of old-time white Indian fighters seems conclusive that of all the Indians of the plains, the Cheyennes were the bravest and the best fighters, from the white man's point of view.

He speaks of the Forsyth fight, where Colonel Forsyth, with fifty-odd plainsmen, "fighting on foot in the open", held off some five hundred picked warriors. Just what is meant by "in the open" is uncertain. The scouts, with repeating arms, fought behind breastworks, while the Indians—three-fourths of whom were armed with bows and arrows—fought on the bare prairie, without any cover.

Mr. Mooney's choice of the named *Record of Engagements* to support his views is not happy; for that pamphlet contains many errors.

The account of the arrival of the Cheyennes at the Medicine Lodge Treaty (1867) is criticized, yet their coming was late. The account given by Senator Henderson, and his statement that he thought "we were in peril" will amuse anyone acquainted with the old-time customs of plains Indians. Neither Senator Henderson nor the reviewer of the book seems to have been aware that in those days a charge such as is here described—Indians yelling and firing their guns—was a sign of friendship. Not less odd is the statement that every man had a belt of cartridges around his waist, and a small bunch fastened at his wrist. In the year 1867 not twenty-five per cent. of these Indians possessed guns, and of these guns not one per cent.—perhaps not one-half of one per cent.—was other than a muzzle-loader. Practically none were breachloaders using metal cartridges. Obviously the practice of carrying cartridges in a belt around the waist arose only after fixed ammunition came into use, and it is perfectly certain that when the senator—or anyone else—gave a description of this kind, he was unconsciously drawing on his imagination and talking about conditions as they prevailed among the white men a few years later.

The book under review states that the 7th Cavalry was present as an

escort, and this is true notwithstanding Mr. Mooney's statement that it was the 7th Infantry.

There are mistakes enough in the book under discussion, but its critics do not seem yet to have found them.

GEO. BIRD GRINNELL.